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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Millions of enslaved Africans were denied the
3 right of citizenship and the natural protections of government
4 during their time of servitude in North America; and

5 WHEREAS, The 15th Amendment of the United States
6 Constitution declared that the "right of citizens of the United
7 States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United
8 States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous
9 condition of servitude"; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, "Give us the
11 ballot", in an address given in Washington, D.C. on May 17,
12 1957 on the third anniversary of the Brown v. Board of
13 Education decision; and

14 WHEREAS, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
15 (SCLC) launched the "Crusade for Citizenship" campaign in 1957
16 to begin registering disenfranchised voters throughout the
17 South; and

18 WHEREAS, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
19 (SNCC) began voter registration and education campaigns
20 throughout the South in 1961; and

1 WHEREAS, The bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in
2 Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963 prompted the "Program
3 for Action in Alabama" to secure the right to vote; and

4 WHEREAS, More than 300 Dallas County residents stood in
5 line at the Dallas County courthouse in an attempt to register
6 to vote on Freedom Day on October 7, 1963; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1964, only 2% (335 people) of 15,115 eligible
8 black voters in Selma, Alabama were registered to vote; and

9 WHEREAS, Members of the "Courageous Eight" invited Dr. King
10 to come to Selma in December of 1964; and

11 WHEREAS, 600 marchers assembled at Brown Chapel in Selma to
12 embark on a 54-mile walk to Montgomery, Alabama on Sunday,
13 March 7, 1965; and

14 WHEREAS, Dr. King made a call to clergy and all citizens of
15 goodwill to join the people of Selma to continue the march to
16 Montgomery; and

17 WHEREAS, Marchers assembled from around the country at the
18 request of Dr. King and knelt and prayed at the bridge on
19 Turnaround Tuesday on March 9, 1965; and

1 WHEREAS, Tuskegee University students, SNCC members, and
2 other students who came to help the people of Selma initiated
3 demonstrations in Montgomery in support of the right of the
4 people to march; and

5 WHEREAS, President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared "We
6 Shall Overcome" in an address to a joint session of Congress on
7 March 15, 1965 as he announced his plan to introduce
8 legislation to secure the right to vote for all Americans; and

9 WHEREAS, A great multitude of marchers departed Selma for
10 Montgomery on Sunday, March 21, 1965 under federal troop
11 protection; and

12 WHEREAS, Dr. King gave his "How long? Not long" address to
13 over 25,000 people assembled at the United States Capitol; and

14 WHEREAS, The Voting Rights Act was introduced by President
15 Lyndon Baines Johnson and signed into law on August 6, 1965;
16 therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
18 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
19 commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Selma voting rights
20 movement and recognize the continuing struggle to ensure the
21 voting rights of all Americans.